[illegible]
[illegible] Library
[illegible]/APH

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Fay Woody Leach
Educational Materials Research & Development Specialist

American Printing House for the Blind
Louisville, Kentucky

Materials selection is one of the last steps in the process of educational programming. Briefly, the process could be divided into six general steps:

1. Know the child (or group) with whom you are to work. An understanding of his characteristics should include both abilities and disabilities.

2. Consider the areas of educational concern. There are different methods of categorizing educational goals. These goals should include: motor skills, mobility or premobility skills, self-concept formation, communication skills, self-care and daily living skills, sensory development, and cognitive processes.

3. Outline the behavioral goals for each of the above educational concerns. These should be specific goals such as developing hand grasp or learning to identify parts of the body.

4. Program your educational procedures. These need to be detailed and sequential.

5. Locate and utilize materials and equipment.

6. Evaluate the entire procedure.

There is a wealth of materials available for use with the young blind child; many of these require little or no adaptation. Two materials listings prepared through the Instructional Materials Reference Center at the American Printing House for the Blind are:

AEVH 51st

1. "Commercially Available Instructional Materials for use in the Development of Elementary Readiness Skills in Young Visually Handicapped Students"

2. "Commercially Available Recorded Instructional Materials for the Development of Communication Skills"

The area in which there seems to be the greatest need for adapting or developing new materials, especially for multiply handicapped visually impaired children, is language development. At the elementary level, much of what is available in language materials is too visually oriented.

A number of guides which aid in the knowledge of materials used by visually handicapped students have been developed in recent years. "The Visually Impaired Child: Growth, Learning Development - Infancy to School Age" (APH 8-5104, 50¢) by Carol Halliday and "Toys for Early Development of the Young Blind Child" available through the Illinois IMC are examples of these.

Materials selection must be thought through very carefully. The following questions can be used as a guide in selecting instructional materials for young blind or multiple handicapped visually impaired children. The relevance and significance of each question will depend upon specific needs and purposes:

1. Is a multi-sensory approach emphasized? Is the development of the senses, preferably more than one sense modality, promoted?

2. Are the materials multi-purposive? Can they be adapted in a number of ways?

3. Is practicality stressed? Is there a focus on everyday situations and prevocational skills?

4. Is simplicity incorporated into the design? Are non-essential elements eliminated?

5. Are the materials highly motivating? Do they have built-in rewards? Do they use a high interest, low vocabulary approach?

6. Is the learning of basic skills and knowledge incorporated? Are these materials designed to help teach elementary concepts which may be accomplished by other children through incidental learning?

7. Are the materials structured for sequential learning? Are they programmed from the very simple to the more complex?

8. Is each item sturdy and durable? Can it be used by older children who function on very elementary levels?

9. Are these materials as safe as possible?

10. Do the materials deal more with concrete experiences than with abstract concepts? Is the child involved in learning by doing?

11. Do the materials focus on the development of communication and language? Is the area of listening skills development fostered?

12. Is independent functioning promoted?

13. Can the materials be used by parents?

14. Do the materials provide for repetition? Are they designed to present the same concept in a variety of ways?

15. Do the materials meet the needs of the older child? Are these items of particular value in the light of a limited quantity of instructional materials available for older multihandicapped visually impaired children functioning on an elementary level?

16. Do the materials aid in reaching the educational objectives outlined?

Instructional materials use can be greatly increased by taking time to brainstorm concerning new and creative ways to use items in addition to those uses which are readily apparent. A simple work-play tray could be used to teach directional concepts, textures, comparisons, and location, to name just a few concepts. All these would be in addition to its obvious purpose of facilitating activity and storage.

In summary, let me say that there are three questions regarding instructional materials that teachers face: (1) What is available? (2) How do I choose the best materials for my students? (3) How do I get the most use from the materials I have?

Finding answers to all three of these questions will greatly improve the educational program for visually handicapped children.

MOVEMENT EXPLORATION AND GYMNASTICS FOR VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Elizabeth Rae Parker, Teacher

Texas School for the Blind
Austin, Texas

A major problem encountered by many visually handicapped individuals is an inability to move freely in space. This restriction of movement is often considered to be the major disability with which the individual must learn to cope. Therefore, during the spring of 1971, a study was designed to test the effects of a gymnastics program on the orientation and mobility skills of young, visually handicapped children. It was hypothesized that the children who participated in a 5-week gymnastics program would have significantly superior orientation and mobility skills when compared with children who did not participate in the gymnastics program.

The subjects of this study were 30 students enrolled at the Texas School for the Blind, Austin, Texas. The children were homogeneous according to sex, age, and amount of vision (partially sighted or totally blind). One child of each matched pair was randomly assigned to a control group and one to an experimental group. A modification of the Orientation and Mobility Scale for Young Blind Children by Francis Lord was administered to the children. Following the pre-test, the experimental group participated in a 5-week program of gymnastics which consisted of activities in tumbling, trampoline, and balance beam.

The gymnastics program consisted of the traditional skills taught to children in each of the three activities. The children met with my staff and me for 45 minutes a day, five days a week. (Five undergraduate physical education majors from the University of Texas assisted with the program.) The children spent approximately 25 minutes working on tumbling skills, 10 minutes a day practicing on the balance beam, and five minutes every other day practicing on the trampoline. This short amount of trampoline time was